

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00600 300806Z
ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 SP-02 INR-05 CIAE-00
NSAE-00 ICAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 PA-01 EB-04 OMB-01
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-----010910 300812Z /15
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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9305

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0600

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, LA, US
SUBJECT: PL 480 ASSISTANCE TO LAOS

REF: STATE 136036

1. THE FOLLOWING UPDATE AND ELUCIDATION OF VIENTIANE 540 IS
PRESENTED AS REQUESTED IN THE REFTEL:

2. WE AGREE THAT THERE IS NO NEED TO GO INTO THE FINE POINTS
OF THE "Q" DESIGNATOR. TO PREVENT ANY ARITHMETICAL CONFUSION,
WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT THE KEY POINTS BE PRESENTED ON THE HILL
AND TO THE PRESS AS FOLLOWS: (A) THE COUNTRY WIDE SHORTFALL
BETWEEN THE LAST WET SEASON HARVEST AND THE NEXT ONE IN
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1978 IS ESTIMATED TO BE 112,500 TONS;
(B) THE FIRM PLEDGES RECEIVED THUS FAR FROM INTERNATIONAL
DONORS TOTAL APPROXIMATELY 80,000 TONS; (C) THE NET UNMET
NEED COUNTRYWIDE IS THUS ABOUT 32,500 TONS; (D) THE AREA
OF EXPECTED GREATEST NEED IN AUGUST IS VIENTIANE PROVINCE.
THIS FORMULATION AVOIDS DISCUSSION OF "SLIPPAGE" AND OF
WHETHER THERE WERE REAL PLEDGES OR JUST OVEROPTIMISM BY
THE LAO AND BY LOCAL UNDP/WFP OFFICIALS.

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3. WE ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH WORKING LEVEL WFP OFFICIALS
HERE AND TRY TO GET CONSTANT UPDATES ON LAO NEEDS. WE
WOULD THINK THAT BY MID-AUGUST WE WOULD BE GETTING
GOOD INDICATIONS OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE NEED IN
VIENTIANE PROVINCE. LAST YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, RICE
DISAPPEARED FROM CITY MARKETS IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER.

4. THE BEST TECHNIQUE FOR OBTAINING BETTER END USE OBSERVANCE IS THE ONE ENVISAGED BY THE DEPARTMENT: MAKING IT PLAIN THAT ANY FURTHER AID WILL DEPEND ON THE WFP'S BEING ABLE TO MONITOR THE CONSUMPTION OF THE FIRST 10,000 TONS BY TRULY NEEDY PEOPLE. WE CAN MAKE THIS POINT DIRECTLY TO THE LAO, AS INSTRUCTED. WE CAN ALSO MAKE IT CLEAR TO UNDP/WFP OFFICIALS AND TO THE U.S. RELIGIOUS GROUP REPRESENTATIVES HERE, WHO HAVE THEIR OWN GOOD CONTACTS WITH THE LAO.

5. THE FACT THAT COMMODITIES ARRIVING IN AUGUST WILL PROBABLY BE CONSUMED IN VIENTIANE PROVINCE SHOULD EASE THE MONITORING PROBLEM. NEVERTHELESS, WE RECOMMEND THAT WE BE FRANK WITH CONGRESS AND OTHER INTERESTED OBSERVERS--THE LAO ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS IS WEAK AND THE INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION IS BAD. MONITORING AND END USE OBSERVANCE ARE THUS NOT RPT NOT GOING TO BE AS GOOD AS WE MIGHT LIKE THEM TO BE.

6. THERE IS A SMALL CHANCE THE LAO WOULD DECLINE OUR OFFER. WE THINK THIS IS UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, SINCE THEY MUST HAVE MADE A BASIC POLITICAL DECISION WHEN THEY MADE THEIR REQUEST TO US LAST JANUARY. IF THEY DO REFUSE OUR OFFER, THEY WILL BE THE ONES WHO LOOK BAD, SINCE THE U.N. FIGURES ON WHICH OUR ESTIMATE NEEDS IS BASED (PARA 2 ABOVE) ARE AVAILABLE TO ANYONE WHO

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ASKS. THEY WILL BE EXPOSED AS PLAYING POLITICS WITH THEIR OWN PEOPLE'S HUNGER AND WILL JEOPARDIZE WHATEVER SYMPATHY THEY HAVE INHERITED FROM ANTI-WAR GROUPS IN THE U.S. AND WHATEVER SYMPATHY THEY HAVE BUILT UP IN CONGRESS. WE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL BE IN THE POSITION OF HAVING MADE AN HONEST, TANGIBLE, AND HUMANITARIAN GESTURE WHICH WAS THEN SPURNED. ROBERTS

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